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(56) Documents Cited

WPI abstract Accession No. 199-533590 &
JP110232053 A PAJ English abstract for JP050298041
& JP050298041 A PAJ English abstract for
JP630296953 & JP630296953 A

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(54) Abstract Title

Updating firmware in a printing device

(57) An imaging system 10 (eg printer) includes a firmware-based internal page component 16. The internal page component 16 is capable of receiving and registering internal page data from a source 18 external to the page component 16 itself. The internal page component 16 can install a control panel display menu item corresponding to the registered internal page, and then capture user control panel input relating to that page. The component can then open a data pipe, and invoke the internal page data. The data pipe can be provided in the form of a VIO channel, e.g., invoking a print job, or can involve converting internal page data to a format capable of being viewed by a web browser.

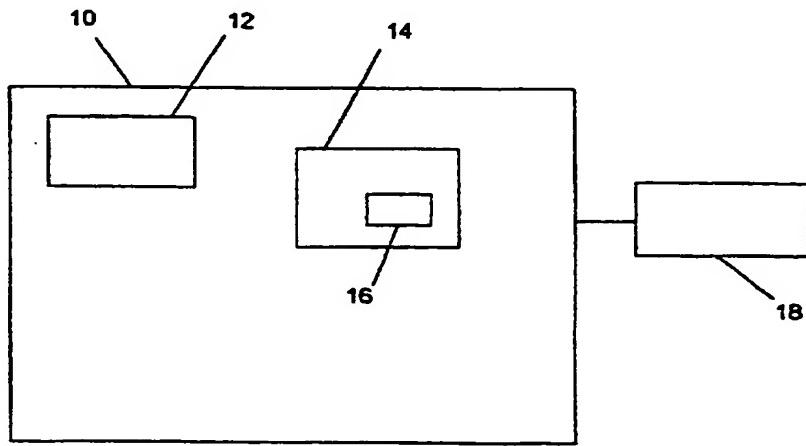


FIG. 1

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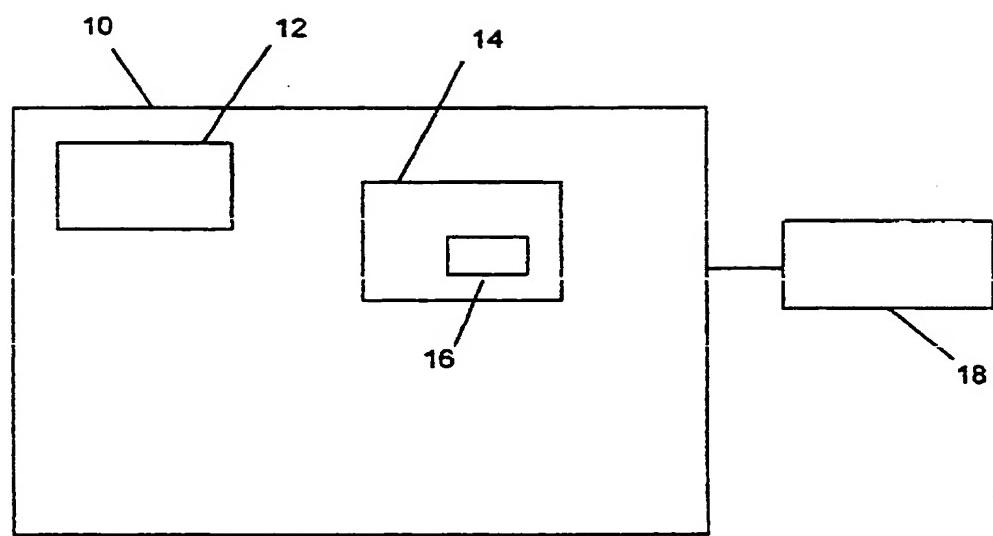


FIG. 1

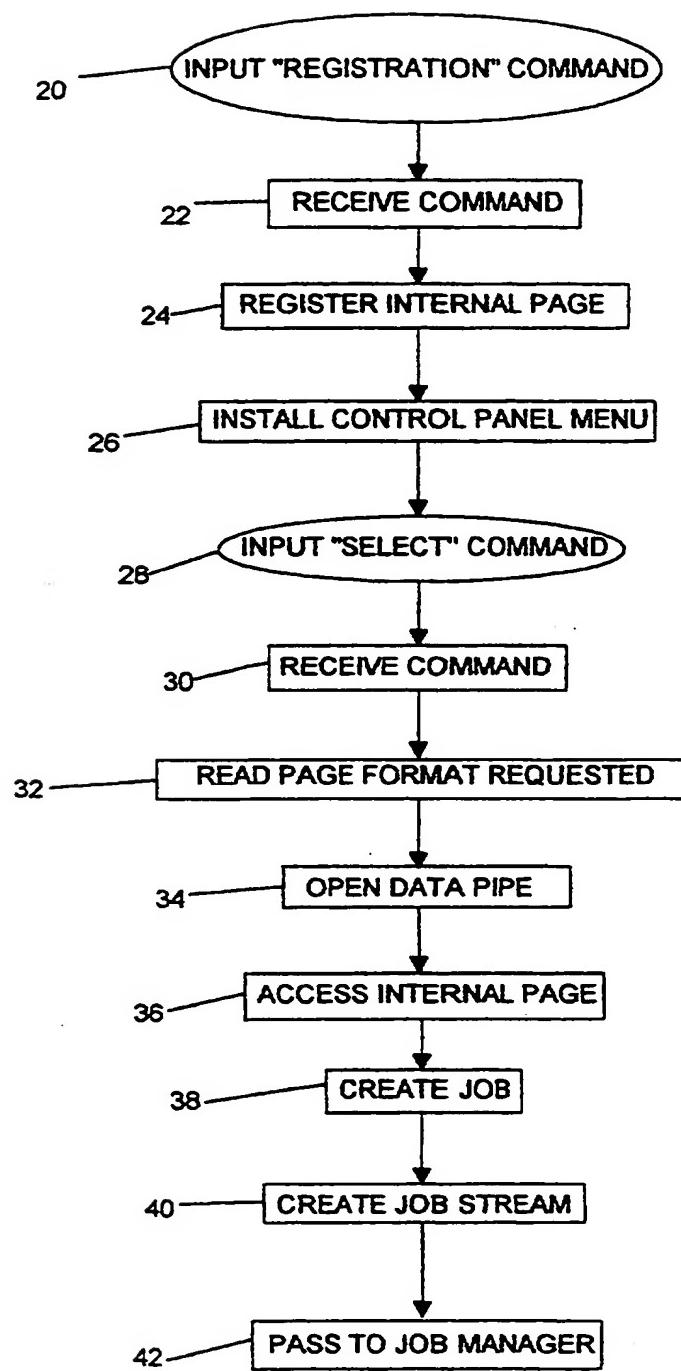


FIG. 2

DYNAMIC INTERNAL PAGE REGISTRATION AND RETRIEVAL SYSTEM

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to internal pages associated with imaging systems. More specifically, the present invention relates to FIRMWARE-BASED dynamic registration and retrieval of internal pages from sources external to the imaging system.

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BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Imaging systems such as printers, fax machines, and copiers are virtually omnipresent, and can be found in homes and offices worldwide. The development of such systems has facilitated improvements in communication that have in turn fostered an enormous change in the way people live and work. 10 Telecommuting, paperless offices, and intra-office networks represent but a few examples of the advancements that have been made possible by modern imaging systems.

Some imaging systems, such as the HP LASERJET 8100 by Hewlett-Packard Company, use firmware as part of their operating systems. 15 Firmware gets its name from having characteristics of both hardware and software, and is typically provided as permanent instructions embedded within ROM (read-only memory) chips, such as PROM - Programmable and ROM EPROM - Erasable Programmable ROM.

One example of a firmware-based feature in an imaging system is 20 an "internal page". Internal pages contain information that is useful to imaging system users, such as printer configuration pages, printer network card pages, and font list pages. Typically, internal pages are permanently installed in the system firmware, and invoked by system users via the imaging system's control panel. Since the pages are part of the firmware build, it is relatively difficult to 25 add additional internal pages or to alter existing pages. For example, if a marketing department found it desirable to generate an internal page

demonstrating a new printer accessory, it would be necessary to install a special firmware build to create a special printer configuration page containing the desired information. In addition to the special build, a method of invoking the special page from the existing control panel is required. A currently known 5 method involves installing a control panel display menu, then capturing the SELECT key press from the user keyboard input. A VIO (Virtual Input/Output) channel is opened up, and the internal page is printed.

Thus, in known systems, both a special firmware build and page-specific instructions are required to make any changes or additions to 10 internal pages. Given the complexity and expense involved, these requirements present a significant obstacle to making otherwise desirable changes. Consequently, this potentially useful information channel is not being used to its fullest potential in existing system configurations.

It can thus be seen that the need exists for a method and 15 apparatus for adding and retrieving internal pages that ameliorates the disadvantages of internal page alterations in known systems.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

These and other objects are achieved by providing, in an imaging system including firmware and a user interface control panel, a firmware-based 20 internal page component. The internal page component is capable of receiving and registering internal page data from a source external to the page component itself. The internal page component can install a control panel display menu item corresponding to the registered internal page, and then capture user control panel input relating to that page. The component can then open a data pipe, 25 and invoke the internal page data. The data pipe can be provided in the form of a VIO channel, e.g., invoking a print job, or can involve converting internal page data to a format capable of being viewed by a web browser.

The internal page component can be installed as a part of the firmware of the imaging system. Internal page data can be received from a

source external to the imaging system firmware, for example, from a storage device such as a flash disk, RAM disk, or hard disk.

The internal page component can be embodied as a firmware-based dynamic internal page system. The internal page system 5 includes an internal page registration mechanism adapted and constructed to register internal pages from page sources external to the firmware of the imaging system. The internal page system also includes an internal page retrieval mechanism adapted and constructed to selectively retrieve internal pages from the page sources.

10 The internal page registration mechanism can be provided with the ability to create dedicated menu items in the imaging system firmware, and to receive internal page data from a source external to the imaging system firmware.

In imaging systems having a control panel including a plurality of 15 menu items, and the internal page retrieval mechanism can be adapted and constructed to receive input from the imaging system control panel. Where the imaging system includes a job manager, and the internal page retrieval mechanism can be adapted and constructed to create a job stream in response to input from the imaging system control panel, then send the job stream to the 20 system job manager.

A method of handling internal pages in an imaging system including firmware is also provided. The method includes the step of providing an internal page component in the imaging system firmware. The internal page component is then actuated to register at least one internal page from a page 25 source external to the firmware of the imaging system. Next, the internal page component is actuated to selectively retrieve at least one registered internal page.

The step of actuating the internal page component to register at least one internal page can include the step of creating at least one dedicated 30 menu item in the imaging system firmware, and that of receiving internal page

data from a source external to the imaging system firmware, for example, an external storage device.

The step of actuating the internal page component to selectively retrieve at least one registered internal page can include receiving input from the 5 imaging system control panel to select a particular registered internal page, then creating a job stream in response to input from the imaging system control panel, then sending the job stream to the system job manager.

The features of the invention believed to be patentable are set forth with particularity in the appended claims. The invention itself, however, 10 both as to organization and method of operation, together with further objects and advantages thereof, may be best understood by reference to the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a schematic illustration of an imaging system including an 15 internal page registration component in accordance with the principles of the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a flow chart illustrating the operation of an imaging system including an internal page registration component in accordance with the principles of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

An imaging system 10 in accordance with the principles of the present invention is shown in FIG. 1. The imaging system 10 can be provided, for example, as a printer, copier, or fax machine. The illustrative examples that follow are set in the context of a LASERJET 8100 printer manufactured by 25 Hewlett-Packard company. It will be understood, however, that the principles of the present invention are applicable to any suitable imaging system.

The imaging system 10 includes a control panel 12 which provides a user interface mechanism. The control panel 12 can be, for example, a keyboard or touchscreen as is known in the art. The control panel 12 is

connected to imaging system firmware 14, which contains permanent instructions mbedded within a ROM chip.

In accordance with the present invention, the imaging system firmware 14 includes an internal page component 16. The internal page

5 component 16 is composed of a set of programming instructions, residing in the firmware 14, that allow the internal page component 16, in conjunction with the operating system of the imaging system 10 and external data source 18 (external to the imaging system firmware), to function as an internal page system. That is, implementation of the steps contained in the internal page
10 component 16 results in an internal page registration mechanism that is adapted and constructed to register internal pages from page sources external to the firmware of the imaging system; and an internal page retrieval mechanism adapted and constructed to selectively retrieve internal pages from the page sources.

15 Those of skill in the art will recognize that the specific programming used to achieve the results described herein will become apparent upon appreciation of the operational flow chart set forth in FIG. 2. The internal page registration process begins at point 20, wherein an internal page from an external source communicates with the internal page component to register
20 itself. Such communication can be established through the operating system of the imaging system in any suitable manner, such as by modem from a remote location, or from the a storage device such as a flash disk, RAM disk, or hard disk associated with the imaging system. The internal page component receives the registration command at point 22, and proceeds at point 24 to register the
25 internal page. Registration of the internal page involves assigning a page I.D. and installing a control panel menu item associated with the page at point 26. The internal page is now registered, and can be called up via its menu item on the control panel. The foregoing steps can be considered to make up an internal page registration mechanism.

30 The internal page retrieval process begins at point 28, where a system user accesses the internal page by selecting its corresponding menu item

from the control panel. The internal page component receives the "sel ct" command at point 30, and at point 32 reads the appropriate page I.D. The internal page component then opens a data pipe at point 34, through which it accesses the internal page at point 36. As will be apparent to those of skill in the art, the data pipe can be provided in the form of a VIO channel, e.g., a data pipe to facilitate invoking a print job, or can involve converting internal page data to a format capable of being viewed by a web browser.

In imaging systems, such as the LASERJET 8100, which are provided with job managers, the internal component creates a job at point 38, then creates a job stream at point 40 which is filled with the internal page data, passing the job to the job manager at point 42. The job manager then presents the job to the user in the desired format. For example, the job manager can merely invoke a print job, that is, print out the internal page data in document form. Alternatively, the job manager could convert the internal page into a format capable of being viewed by a web browser. Of course, in the absence of a job manager, it is contemplated that the internal page component would simply cause the imaging system to print the internal page, or to utilize whatever capabilities were present in the particular imaging system.

It will be appreciated that the potential applications of the present invention are many and varied. For example, advertisers could add internal pages to provide company information. In another example, manufacturers of printer accessories wishing to demonstrate their products can provide internal pages containing demo instructions in their device firmware. The accessory pages can then register themselves with the imaging system internal page component, which will create a menu item allowing system users to access the demo. Yet another example is that of imaging system customer service. The internal page component can be set up so that a customer service rep can access the imaging system to obtain needed data, such as an Error Log page, by instructing the imaging system to send the information directly to a customer service PC via a web browser. The internal page system, as set forth above, can convert internal page data into a format viewable by a web browser. Of

course, such access extends to all resident and non-resident internal pages. Finally, companies operating multiple printers can track data such as printer and printer consumables usage. A standard template compiling such information can be loaded as an internal page into hard disk, and installed into each of the
5 printers. The template can then be registered with the internal page component residing in the printer's firmware, for example, as an INVENTORY PAGE in the SERVICE MENU. When desired or at regular intervals (e.g., monthly billing), service technicians can enter the SERVICE MENU, select the PRINT INVENTORY PAGE command, and a page is printed containing information gathered.

10 Although the present invention has been described with reference to specific embodiments, those of skill in the art will recognize that changes may be made thereto without departing from the scope and spirit of the invention as defined by the appended claims.

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1 1. In an imaging system (10) including firmware (14) and a
2 user interface control panel (12), a firmware-based internal page component (16)
3 comprising the following:

4 means for receiving and registering internal page data from a
5 source (18) external to the internal page component (16);

6 means for installing a control panel display menu item;

7 means for capturing user control panel input;

8 means for opening a data pipe; and

9 means for invoking internal page data via the data pipe.

1 2. An internal page component (16) according to claim 1,
2 wherein the internal page component (16) comprises a part of firmware (14)
3 installed in the imaging system (10).

1 3. An internal page component (16) according to any of the
2 preceding claims, wherein the means for receiving and registering comprises
3 means for receiving internal page data from a source (18) external to the
4 imaging system firmware (14).

1 4. An internal page component (16) according to any of the
2 preceding claims, wherein the means for receiving and registering comprises
3 means for receiving internal page data from a storage device.

1 5. An internal page component (16) according to any of the
2 preceding claims, wherein the means for receiving and registering comprises
3 means for receiving internal page data from a source (18) selected from a group
4 consisting of flash disk, RAM disk, and hard disk.

1 6. An internal page component (16) according to any of the
2 preceding claims, wherein the means for opening a data pip comprises means
3 for opening a VIO channel, and the means for invoking internal page data
4 comprises means for invoking a print job.

1 7. An internal page component (16) according to any of the
2 preceding claims, wherein the means for opening a data pipe comprises means
3 for opening a web browser, and the means for invoking internal page data
4 comprises means for converting internal page data to a format capable of being
viewed by a web browser.



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Claims searched: all

Examiner: Russell Maurice
Date of search: 30 April 2001

Patents Act 1977
Search Report under Section 17

Databases searched:

UK Patent Office collections, including GB, EP, WO & US patent specifications, in:
UK CI (Ed. S): G4A (AFMD AFL)
Int Cl (Ed. 7): G06F 3/12, 9/445 11/22, 11/27, 11/32, 13/10
Other: ONLINE WPI, EPODOC, PAJ, TDB, XPESP

Documents considered to be relevant:

Category	Identity of document and relevant passage	Relevant to claims
X	WPI abstract Accession No. 199-533590 & JP110232053 A (Kiyoshi)	1 at least
X	PAJ English abstract for JP050298041 & JP050298041 A (Akio, see abstract)	1 at least
X	PAJ English abstract for JP630296953 & JP630296953 A (Yoshio, see abstract)	1 at least

X	Document indicating lack of novelty or inventive step	A	Document indicating technological background and/or state of the art
Y	Document indicating lack of inventive step if combined with one or more other documents of same category.	P	Document published on or after the declared priority date but before the filing date of this invention.
&	Member of the same patent family	E	Patent document published on or after, but with priority date earlier than, the filing date of this application.